

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 08036 120047Z

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FOR DIRECTOR GENERAL LAISE FROM AMBASSADOR JOVA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: AFSP, SCA, APER

SUBJ: ESTABLISHMENT CADRE STANDBY RETIREES AND/OR FS
SPOUSES TO MEET CONSULAR EMERGENCIES

1. I VERY MUCH APPRECIATE THE DEPARTMENT'S THOUGHTFULNESS IN PROVIDING THE EMBASSY WITH TDY CONSULAR OFFICERS AND TEMPORARY SUMMER-HIRE HELP DURING RECENT WEEKS. THIS WELCOME ASSISTANCE COMBINED WITH THE SHORT-TERM REPROGRAMMING OF OUR OWN RESOURCES, ENABLED US ESSENTIALLY TO COPE WITH A DEMAND FOR VISA SERVICES WHICH, AT ITS PEAK, EXCEEDED PREVIOUS SUMMER HIGHS BY TWENTY-FIVE PERCENT. WHILE FORCED ON MANY DAYS TO TURN AWAY HUNDREDS OF APPLICANTS, WE MANAGED OVERALL TO PROVIDE VISA SERVICES WHICH ENABLED MOST TRAVELLERS TO MAINTAIN THEIR BUSINESS AND VACATION SCHEDULES. OUR INABILITY TO PROVIDE TIMELY SERVICE FOR SOME APPLICANTS HAS OBVIOUSLY DULLED OUR PUBLIC SERVICE IMAGE, AND THE MOST DISGRUNTLED APPLICANTS MAY WONDER WHETHER FUTURE VISITS TO THE US. ARE WORTH THE FRUSTRATION OF SEEKING A VISA. FOR THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, THE WORKLOAD IS DROPPING TO MORE MANAGEABLE PROPORTIONS AND WE HOPE AT LAST TO ALLOW CONSULAR OFFICERS TIED DOWN THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER TO TAKE LIMITED VACATIONS BEFORE BRACING FOR THE THANKS-GIVING THROUGH CHRISTMAS VISA UPSURGE.

2. ALTHOUGH THE DEPARTMENT HAS EXPRESSED SOME PESSIMISM ABOUT RECALLING RETIRED PERSONNEL TO MEET CONSULAR CRISES, I BELIEVE THAT RETIRED OFFICERS,
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PAGE 02 MEXICO 08036 120047Z

USED SELECTIVELY AND FOR SHORT PERIODS, WOULD PROVIDE

AN INTERIM SOLUTION TO THE VEXING PROBLEM OF HAVING WORLDWIDE SOME FIFTY FUNDED POSITIONS AND NO OFFICERS TO FILL THEM. TDY ASSIGNMENTS HAVE A ROB-PETER-TO-PAY-PAUL EFFECT AND ONLY SHIFT THE PROBLEM FROM ONE POST OR OFFICE TO ANOTHER. THE USE OF NON-COMMISSIONED DEPENDENTS, WHILE WELCOME, OFFERS ONLY CLERICAL SUPPORT WHEREAS COMMISSIONED, DECISION-MAKING OFFICERS ARE ACTUALLY NEEDED. A LONG-RANGE SOLUTION HINGES ON VIGOROUS RECRUITMENT AND THE RE-PROGRAMMING AND RE-TRAINING OF EXISTING OFFICERS, BUT IN THE MEANTIME WE MUST FIND A SHORT-TERM ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM. WHEN I ORIGINALLY RECOMMENDED THE USE OF RETIRED OFFICERS, I ONLY HAD IN MIND MEXICO'S CONSULAR PROBLEMS. REALIZING THAT SHORT STAFFS AND BURGEONING WORKLOADS ALSO PLAGUE OTHER POSTS, I NOW RECOMMEND THAT PER AND SCA, WORKING WITH THE GEOGRAPHIC BUREAUS, CONSIDER ESTABLISHING A LIST OF RETIRED CONSULAR OFFICERS WHO COULD BE CALLED BACK ON SHORT NOTICE TO MEET A CONSULAR CRISIS ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

3. I AM MINDFUL THAT RE-APPOINTMENT ACTIONS, INCLUDING SUCH FACTORS AS UPDATING SECURITY CLEARANCES AND REQUESTING COMMISSIONS ENTAIL TIME-CONSUMING ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSING. NEVERTHELESS, THE SATISFACTION OF MEETING RATHER THAN NOT MEETING THE EVER-GROWING DEMAND FOR CONSULAR SERVICES FROM AN INCREASINGLY IRATE PUBLIC WOULD SEEM TO MAKE THE EFFORT DESIRABLE IF NOT ESSENTIAL. I ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT NOT EVERY RETIRED OFFICER WOULD BE INTERESTED OR QUALIFIED TO SERVE IN A CONSULAR ROLE, PARTICULARLY AS AN ON-THE-LINE VISA OFFICER. AT POSTS IN MEXICO WE WOULD PREFER ABLE BODIES OF WOOD AND BEARERS OF WATER, NOT PROGRAM DIRECTORS. MANY SUCH RECENTLY RETIRED OFFICERS WOULD BE FLATTERED TO KNOW THAT THE SERVICE NEEDS THEM AND HOPEFULLY WOULD BE WILLING TO BREAK THE PATTERN OF RETIREMENT TO SERVE BRIEFLY (30 TO 120 DAYS) IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY WHERE THEIR CONSULAR AND LANGUAGE SKILLS COULD BE USED TO ADVANTAGE.

4. ANOTHER PROMISING SOURCE OF NOW-AND-THEN HELP MIGHT
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PAGE 03 MEXICO 08036 120047Z

BE OUR VERY ABLE FOREIGN SERVICES SPOUSES WHO ARE ALREADY SECURITY CLEARED AND WHO, IN SOME INSTANCES, HAVE HAD SUCCESSFUL CAREERS OF THEIR OWN. WITH MINIMAL CONSULAR TRAINING AT POST AND WITH VICE CONSUL COMMISSIONS, THEY TOO COULD BE GIVEN TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS TO ASSIST WITH THE DECISION MAKING INVOLVED IN EMERGENCY CONSULAR SITUATIONS.

5. SINCE EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT SEASONAL HIGH PEAKS IN CONSULAR WORKLOADS ARE INEVITABLE, AND SINCE IN RECENT YEARS WE HAVE TOO OFTEN FAILED TO PROVIDE TIMELY SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC DURING THESE PERIODS, I BELIEVE A CADRE OF VERSATILE STANDBY RETIREES OR AT-POST SPOUSES WOULD OFFER AN INTERIM WAY OF PROVIDING TEMPORARY HELP UNTIL THAT DAY ARRIVES WHEN ALL POSTS SHALL HAVE THE STAFFS REQUIRED TO DEAL WITH THE ALREADY LARGE AND SOON TO BE LARGER DEMAND FOR CONSULAR SERVICES. THE WELL ESTABLISHED PRECEDENT OF UTILIZING SOME RETIRED OFFICERS IN ACTIVE STATUS THROUGH FSR OR CONSULTANT APPOINTMENTS MIGHT WELL SERVE TO ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVE IN THIS SITUATION.

6. AT MEXICO CITY WE WOULD WARMLY WELCOME SUCH HELP AND OTHER TROUBLED POSTS WOULD NO DOUBT BE EQUALLY RATEFUL. THE PROGRAM STABILITY AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE CAPABILITY THUS GAINED WOULD MEASURABLY STRENGTHEN THE MORALE OF OUR BELEAGUED CONSULAR COLLABORATORS AND ENHANCE OUR STATURE WITH THE PUBLIC. THESE ENDS CLEARLY SERVE THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE AND THE US. GOVERNMENT AND SEEM STRONGLY TO RECOMMEND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CORPS OF RETIRED CONSULAR OFFICERS AND/OR QUALIFIED SPOUSES WHO, POSSESSING OPEN-ENDED COMMISSIONS, COULD BE CALLED TO DUTY IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS. I URGE EARLY CONSIDERATION OF THIS PROPOSAL.

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